

FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS 1871-1914 9

Austria and Italy were groundless, its anxieties about French armaments were correct. "The burden is too heavy even for the richest country to bear for long/" added the semi-official organ; "they can only be preparations for the object which no clear eye can fail to see." The *Preussische Jahrbucher* declared that arms must decide.

On April 15 Gontaut-Biron, who had been away from Berlin, returned to his post and explained to the Foreign Minister that the horses had not been ordered by the War Office, that the simultaneous reduction of the size of the battalion would reduce the increase of the army to about 30,000, and that there was no thought of attack. Billow appeared to be satisfied; and the same evening the Emperor, always since 1871 an influence for peace, meeting the French Military Attache at a reception, observed, "On a voulu nous brouiller . . . Maintenant tout est termine, tout a fait termine." Unfortunately the danger was not over, for Gontaut-Biron learned from friends that Bismarck was not yet pacified. "Von Krieg ist gar keine Rede," he remarked to Lucius von Ballhausen on April 19; but on April 21 at a dinner at the British Embassy the French Ambassador heard from the lips of Radowitz, a Foreign Office functionary, words which filled him with terror. When he complained of the German press campaign and spoke of the pacific intentions of France, Radowitz replied, "Can you answer for the future? France is bent on revenge. Why then should we wait till she is strong and has found allies?" Radowitz's own official report of this conversation omits these words and suggests that he was merely explaining the ideas which found utterance in the German press.¹ The Ambassador, however, believed that he was expressing the views of the Chancellor, who had used very similar words, and feared that

a preventive war might be launched at any moment. His report alarmed Decazes, the Foreign Minister, who forwarded a copy to the representatives of France abroad, with instructions to bring it to the notice of the Governments. At the same time he ordered the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg to appeal for a public promise by Russia to draw the sword in the event of a German attack. The Tsar had already told Le Flo that there was no danger, and that, if there were to be, he would tell France himself. He now replied, " I shall not draw the sword, nor will you." He added that he was shortly to visit Berlin. Meanwhile Decazes explained to Hohenlohe that France did

¹ *Die Grosse Politik*, i, 275-7.